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# INSTRAW: THE SECOND DECADE

(Not an official record or press release. This summary made available to NGO representatives for their information and free dissemination).

On 7 November 1991, Ms. Margaret Shields, Director, United Nations International Research Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), and Ms. Borjana Bulajich, Social Affairs Officer, INSTRAW, updated the NGO community on the purpose and progress of (INSTRAW).

## The United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)

INSTRAW is an autonomous body within the United Nations framework. Because it is a small organization - one that is primarily concerned with research, training and development - it is less known than many other parts of the United Nations family, Ms. Shields said. Nevertheless, the information it gathers often proves vital to groups and individuals who are concerned about the challenges facing the world's women.

According to Ms. Shields, INSTRAW has defined two major tasks for itself. First, INSTRAW seeks to make women, their contributions and the challenges they face, visible to the rest of the world. Second, the organization works to ensure the initiation and progress of programmes and techniques that include women in the global processes of development and decision-making. Ms. Shields emphasized that INSTRAW is not a welfare system for women. Rather, it is a vehicle for the empowerment of them.

## Greater Visibility for Women

Collecting data and publicizing statistics pertaining to women are effective ways of making them visible to the rest of the world, especially when governments collaborate in the effort. Statistics are generally useful for drawing global attention to issues of major concern. Although INSTRAW will not tell any particular culture how to function, it can provide the facts to those who wish to change or improve.

Elderly women in developing nations, migrant and refugee women, and women in the informal sector are currently three focal points of INSTRAW's statistical work. The organization is also exploring ways to collect data on the domestic lives of women in countries where written surveys are inconclusive because literacy is low.

Including Women in Development

The track record for including women in the development and policy-making process is not good, Ms. Shields said. Additionally, no comprehensive study exists which compares the effects of the inclusion of women at various stages in development projects with results of projects that exclude them. INSTRAW is now working on such a study. To truly contribute to development, contributors must know which kinds of aid are effective, and which are disasterous.

Ms. Shields concluded by expressing her gratitude to the NGO community for the vital role it plays in helping INSTRAW fulfill its goals, and by articulating INSTRAW's hope that all parties will contribute to the gathering and sharing of information which promotes the greater visibility of women.

Women, Water Supply, and Sanitation

Water is necessary for survival and is one of the two main pillars of the environment, Ms. Bulajich said. Last year, the United Nations International Drinking Water and Supply Decade came to a close, but only fifty per cent of the decade's objectives had been met. In the Saharan region, women must still spend eight hours a day fetching water that is often polluted. Five million children die every year from diarrhea related-diseases. In water-related projects, women are often treated as the unpaid construction workers. Furthermore, most water related decisions are made without the consultation of the women they will affect.

To help combat these problems, INSTRAW designed in cooperation with the UN Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCD) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Turin, multi-media training packages on "women, water supply and sanitation" in June 1991 aimed at the national, regional and international levels. Designed for professionals in the water sector who seek to include women in their processes, and rural women who seek technological information, the packages strive to foster awareness among groups and individuals. They can be used by anyone and are especially useful as training for future trainers. In her introduction to the packages, Ms. Bulajich presented the video, Women, Water Supply and Sanitation, a component of one of the packages.